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to-day, he has done enough to keep his memory green, while the records of our nation's history remain, and while we continue to

revere the men, the refining influences of whose creations touch our lives with gentle hand, and shape them daily into fairer forms.

NORAH: THE STORY OF A WILD IRISH GIRL.

BY MRS. OLIPHANT,

AUTHOR OF "MISS MARJORIAMES," "JOHN," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THERE is one thing about Ireland which I don't remember ever to have heard any one notice but myself, which seems a conceited thing to say, as I really know so little about it. It is nothing political, though it may have a connection with Irish politics, for anything I can tell. It is the immense, the extraordinary number of Irish gentry afloat upon the world. I never was in a country neighborhood in England where there were not two or three families, at least; and every one who has ever lived abroad knows what heaps there are at every (so-called) English center, where living is supposed to be cheap, and there is a little society. One stumbles against them wherever one goes; and my opinion is, that it is very pleasant, generally, to make their acquaintance. But the fact has always surprised me. No doubt, one falls upon a Scotch house here and there in the quiet parts of England; but I never knew a village yet without its Irish family. And there was one accordingly at Dinglefield Green.

Almost as much as a matter of course, it was in the funny, tumble-down house at the east end of the Green, which somebody, I suppose in mockery, had nicknamed the Mansion, that they established themselves. The house must have had another name for formal purposes; but it never was called anything but the Mansion among us. It stood in a little, overgrown, very weedy garden; and I know it was damp. But of course, poor things, they could not tell that. It was partly built of wood, and partly covered with creepers; and between the two, you cannot conceive a more moist and mouldy place for people to live in. Creepers are very pretty, but they are not good for the walls, nor for

one's comfort. I do not say it was not rather picturesque, when the Virginia creeper was growing scarlet, and the trees changing color. There were two very fine chestnuts on the lawn in front of the house, and a good deal of wood behind—rather more wood, indeed, than I should have liked. The garden was walled all round, except in front, where the chestnuts made a very nice screen, and showed a pretty peep of the house between them. I have no doubt it was that peep which determined Lady Louisa; and as she knew nobody on the Green, it was impossible for us to warn her that things were not quite so satisfactory within.

However, they came and settled down in summer; after the season, Lady Louisa said. "I hate it myself, me dear," she informed us all; "I'm an old woman, and what's thim balls and kettle-drums to me? Though I don't quarrel with a good dinner when it takes that form, sure it's for *them*, poor things. You can't put an old head on young shoulders; and, upon me honor, I never was the woman to try." So the Beresfords came and settled down among us after their gayeties. We are always curious about a new neighbor on the Green. There are not many of us, and nice people are always an acquisition; whereas, on the contrary, when they are not nice, as has happened now and then, it is very uncomfortable for us all. Personally, the first that I saw of the Beresfords was Norah. Every afternoon when I went out, for the first fortnight after their arrival, I met a young lady who was a stranger to me, and who must, I knew, be one of the new people at the Mansion. She had a quick way of walking, which made it difficult for a shortsighted person like myself to see her face. But when I began to compare notes with my

neighbors, I found that everybody had seen her, and had noticed exactly what I did. We all called her the Girl with the Blue Veil. That was the most conspicuous point about her; and what was still more conspicuous was, that the veil had a hole in it. We made a little merry over this, I confess. One could not but say it was very Irish. Sometimes her veil was thrown over her face, and then the tip of a pretty little nose would be seen through the crevice, or a laughing, dancing, merry eye. I have no doubt she did it on purpose, saucy girl as she was. By degrees, the whole household became known. Lady Louisa herself was a stout little woman, very droll and dowdy; and her eldest daughter was exactly like her, and about the same age, I should think. They both dressed in the same way, and a very funny way it was; and they were exactly the same height, and trudged about everywhere together. Mr. Beresford was a quiet little old man with headaches, and we saw very little of him. Sometimes one of the sons came down from town, and sometimes other Irish families—very fine, shabby, homely people like themselves, with queer old gowns, and heavy old chains, and bracelets, and titles—used to come to see them. We all wondered, at first, how it was they were not ashamed to ask Countesses and Viscountesses, and all sorts of grand-sounding people, to go to the Mansion among the weeds and the damp, and with the remarkable furniture which we knew the house to contain. But, good souls, they were not in the least ashamed of anything; and the other lords and ladies took to it quite kindly too.

We all called, of course, as soon as it could be supposed that they had settled down. If anybody else had gone to the Mansion in the same homely way, the ladies on the Green might have hesitated; but there could be no question about Lady Louisa. They were all in, as it happened, the day I made my visit. They were not the kind of people to throw any glare about the odd little place; but of course, with so many in the room, it could not help but look more cheerful. The windows were ridiculous little casement windows, but they were open; and Norah was there, without her blue veil. Now I don't mean to say

that she was beautiful, or even absolutely pretty, perhaps; but she was the kind of creature that takes you by storm. Her eyes laughed, as if life were the greatest fun in the world; and up to this time I think she had found it so. They were curious eyes. Some people called them green, which was a libel, and some called them gray, which was almost as bad. I have seen them look as near blue as green, and I have seen them darken into hazel for a moment, if any shadow flitted across Norah's sky. But on ordinary occasions they were eyes of gold; they were like crystal, or sparkling running water, with a great yellow sunset shining through it. Her hair was of the Irish kind of hair which I have seen on many beautiful heads—dusky brown, neither light nor fair, with a certain paleness like dead leaves. And she was pale; her lips, even, were not too vivid in color,—everything about her toned down, except the eyes with the light in them, and the whitest teeth I ever saw. She was such a contrast to the others that I cannot help describing her. They were like two little steady old hens troling about together, the mother and Priscilla; whereas Norah was like a bird and had wings. She was standing as I came in, which perhaps made me distinguish her the more; while Lady Louisa and Miss Beresford sat one on each side of my dear old Lady Denzil, who had called that afternoon too.

"Here's Mrs. Mulgrave at last," said Lady Louisa, as if she had known me all my life. "Me dear ma'am, don't look so surprised. Haven't I heard of you from me Lady here, and heaps of friends; and ye may imagine me feelings when I thought you were not going to call. Mr. Beresford has one of his bad headaches; so he'll not have the pleasure of seeing you to-day. But here's me girls, and very glad to make your acquaintance at last."

"I am sure you are very good," I said; and faltered out excuses (though I might have had the sense to see they were not necessary) for having let a whole fortnight pass. Lady Louisa did not pretend to pay the least attention. She was off at a tangent before I had said half a dozen words.

"He married an O'Farrell, me dear lady,"

she said, "and Mr. Beresford's grandmother, as ye may have heard, was step-daughter to old O'Farrell, of Castle Farrell; so he's a near relation, though we haven't seen much of him. They make fun of him because he's a widower, poor man; but ye may take me word, a widower with ten thousand a year is as pretty a thing as ye'll see in a day's journey—and neither chick nor child. They're silly girls, more's the pity, as I tell them every day."

"When a man is a widower so young as that," said Lady Denzil, "I am always sorry for him. It is bad for people beginning over again, even if there was nothing more."

"But he needn't begin over again. Why can't he stay as he is?" said Miss Beresford, with a little prim consciousness, and Norah clapped her hands and went off into wild laughter most exhilarating to hear.

"I would if I were him," she said, "if it was only for the fun of cheating mamma and you. But the man is old,—he's five-and-thirty. He might be one's grandfather—and a widower. If I were Prissy, I know what I should say."

"You would stop till you were asked, me dear," said Lady Louisa; "and so will your sister—and sure it's the height of bad breeding to be speaking of a thing Mrs. Mulgrave hasn't heard of till now. It's Col. Fitzgerald, me dear ma'am, that's come to the Castle—a cousin of their own, and ye hear how they're making fun of him. His wife, poor little soul, died within the year, and ye may take me word, being a young man, he's looking out again. So I don't see why they should not have the chance, as well as another. Now don't ye agree with me?"

"It depends on what the young ladies think," said I, so much amazed that I really could not for the moment see the fun, not withstanding the dancing laughter in Norah's eyes.

"Ah, then, and what do they know?" said Lady Louisa, "a pack of girls! Norah, me child, sit down and be quiet, do, or the ladies will think ye a tomboy, and it's not far wrong they would be. It's a young woman's duty to marry, as I always tell them, and I don't see that there's much prospect here, where

you've no gentlemen to speak of—unless it's the officers. We'd have laughed in my time to think of the men failing. They used to be as plenty as blackberries in the old days."

"We have got our brothers," said Miss Priscilla, "and I don't know what more we want. You would not find it so easy to get on without us as you think, mamma."

"I don't think of meself, me dear," said Lady Louisa; and abandoned the subject abruptly, with that fine sense of the genius of conversation which belongs to her race. "Mr. Beresford would have called on Sir Thomas, me dear Lady, but for his headaches. Sure we all know what a man is when he is ill. You can't tell how I'm hoping the place will suit him. We've done nothing but wander about since me children were babies. As for our own country, it's out of the question. The damp, and the heat, and the cold, and altogether. But I hear you've a fine bracing air on the Green?"

"Yes," said Lady Denzil and myself, both together, but there was, of course, a certain hesitation in our voices, which Lady Louisa was much too sharp not to observe. We were thinking of the Mansion itself and the damp, but that we could not explain.

"Ah, well," she said, looking at us. "It is not easy to know who to trust. Time will show. It is a droll little bit of a house, but we make it do. We had some friends over to lunch yesterday, our cousin Lady Langdale, and young Everton, her eldest son. That's a fine young fellow now—very handsome, me dear lady, and I fear, if one must believe all the tales one hears, very fast too—but the best of sons. As pleased to come down here with his dear mother as if he had been going to—well, I was going to say the Castle, but that's not very exciting now-a-days, me dear ma'am."

"Why, he came to have some fun, mamma," said Norah. "Don't you know it's great fun coming to this tumble-down old place? I like it of all things. One can skip about as one pleases, and nobody minds—instead of having to mend one's glove, and put up one's hair, and look as proper as four pins."

"But we rather pique ourselves upon being proper all the same," said Lady Denzil, "and

you must not teach the girls to be wild, my dear, though it is very nice to see you skipping about—even with holes in your gloves”

We looked at each other, my old friend and I, and had a little difficulty in keeping our countenances. It was all of a piece, somehow, and though one might be didactic as one's duty, one had no particular desire to set it right.

After the little glimpse we had been having of the Mansion and its inmates, there was something quite harmonious in that hole in Norah's veil.

“But Norah is quite particular about her gloves, I assure you,” said Miss Beresford. “She is not such a wild Irish girl as people think, though she will run about. Mamma has no proper maid just now—”

“Ah,” sighed Lady Louisa, “don't remind me of it, me dear. I've never had a proper maid, me dear ladies, I give you my word, since that fool of a girl went and married under me very nose, as it were. They will marry, the fools! as soon as they've got to be a bit useful to ye. And to prove it, I've got no cook in the house at this minute, if ye'll believe it, me dear ma'am, which is worse, when there's a man to be fed, than the want of a good maid.”

“Oh dear, I am very sorry,” said I. “Can—one—be of any use, Lady Louisa? Of course it is strange on so short an acquaintance—but if my servants can do anything—”

“It's like your kindness,” said Lady Louisa, pressing my hand. “But we do the best we can. There's the lad that came with us; sure he's the son of an old butler of ours, and he's seen a good deal for his condition in life, and a very pretty notion of a dinner he has, I assure you; and me maid, such as she is—I don't call her a clever maid—but she can take a turn at anything. It's handy, me dear ladies, when you're moving about, and can't carry a full establishment at your tails. And we get along. Mr. Beresford's an invalid, thank God, and not so unreasonable as most men about the cooking. And oh, I assure ye, we get along.”

Lady Denzil had turned to Norah, and was speaking to the child over her shoulder as this revelation was made to me, and I could

do nothing but falter a hope that she would soon feel herself settled down, and be supplied with cooks and everything necessary, as I rose to go away.

“Ah, then, it does not take so long to settle down,” said Lady Louisa, rising, “when ye are used to it like me. I come in, me dear ma'am, and I give meself a shake, and I'm at home, whatever the place may be. It isn't a palace,” she continued, looking round, “and the furniture is old-fashioned, but we've put in some of our own knick-knacks, ye see, which I always carry about with me, and that does more than anything to give the home-look. Norah, ring for old Ferns to show me Lady Denzil the door.”

“Is this the man of all work, who has a pretty notion of a dinner?” I could not refrain from whispering as we went out. We had shaken hands and got quite clear of the drawing-room—indeed, we were outside the door; out of all possibility, as I thought, of being overheard. But before Lady Denzil could answer, a fresh, sweet, ringing peal of laughter came upon my astonished ear.

“Oh no, not that old fellow; but I'll show him to you if you please,” said Norah Beresford, suddenly making her appearance round the corner. “He's the stable boy, and the cleverest boy I know.”

You may suppose how I started! That Mansion is one of the most awkward places for back doors and side doors, so that you never know when you are safe. Of course I made some stupid excuses, but Norah only went off into another fit of laughing. The girl was wild with fun and spirits; she could not be more than eighteen—a kind of dancing fawn—and I took a fancy to the creature on the spot; though, no doubt, if she had been one of our own girls on the Green, who have always been brought up to behave themselves, one might have thought differently. But a young face of that age running over with fun and nonsense is pleasant, when it is sweet nonsense and not wicked. Norah laughed as most people breathe, and it was not from the lips outward, but with all her heart.

“What a light-hearted creature!” I said, with a little sigh, such as middle-aged people are apt to indulge in at such a sight. It

meant *poor thing, she knows no better!* I suppose one cannot help that half-envying, half-melancholy thought.

Lady Denzil was old, not middle aged, and had ceased to feel this little prick of compassion and superiority. She smiled only, she did not sigh, as she waved her hand to Norah. "It is a nice, innocent, cordial sort of laugh,—it does one's heart good to hear it," she said.

"And what a household!" I went on, for we were now quite free of the Mansion and its inmates. "So frank and so queer about everything! Are they half out of their minds, do you think—or is it all a joke?"

"My dear, they are Irish," said Lady Denzil quietly. "And then, why *should* they be ashamed? It is not their own house. I dare say their own place is very nice, if you could see it. And then they have a certain rank, you know. That makes people very easy about what they say. She is Lady Louisa if she lived in a garret. She can't be mistaken; and they take the good of their own mishaps, and see the fun of them just as we do, whereas *our* mishaps only amuse our neighbors, not ourselves," Lady Denzil added. It was very true, perhaps; but one did not like to hear such a sentiment from my Lady's lips.

And before a week was over, as might have been expected, the Green rang with stories of the Irish family. "Fancy, she says Colonel Fitzgerald is a widower with £10,000 a year, and her daughters may as well have the chance as another," Mrs. Stoke said to me, pale with consternation, though such calculations could not be absolutely foreign to her own experience. She was so shocked that it took away her speech for a whole evening: which was very different from its effect on Lady Louisa. "And the stable boy cooks the dinner," said the Admiral, with a laugh that they must have heard on the other side of the Green, and shrugged his shoulders, and added, "Poor devil,"—meaning, no doubt, Mr. Beresford, whom Lady Louisa, on the contrary, thanked God was an invalid, and not so particular. Whenever we met, we had a new story to tell of the Mansion. But it did them no harm, as far as I could see. No cook ever came that we could find out, and

no maid; and the hole in Norah's blue veil survived triumphantly till Christmas, when she tied up the leg of a little table in the drawing-room with it, to the admiration of all beholders. "I never saw such furniture," Norah said; "it breaks if you look hard at it." I suppose it must be made expressly for furnished houses; and then she tied up the little table, which had a sprain, with the blue veil.

But notwithstanding, they were the greatest acquisition we had met with for a long while on the Green. Norah was a favorite everywhere; our pet, and the darling of the village, though she was not always perfectly tidy. And as for Miss Priscilla, though she was by way of being the precise and old-maidenly sister, even she had a suppressed sense of fun with all her primness. I do not believe they read three books from one year's end to another. The girls knew nothing to speak of, except a snattering of languages, which they had picked up abroad in their wanderings. Really, I cannot help thinking sometimes it is great nonsense, the fuss we make about education. Norah was a great deal nicer than if she had been well educated. I am old-fashioned, I suppose, but on the other hand I am very fond of books, which have been my closest companions for years; but yet—Those lively, keen, open eyes, seeing everything—that vivacious original mind, finding out the fun first of all, and then heaps of other meanings, if they were but ever so slightly indicated to her, in everything she heard or saw—are worth a great deal more than mere knowledge. I hate dull people, uneducated or not, which I fear is a very unchristian sentiment when one thinks how many of our fellow-creatures are very dull—and I love intelligence about all things, without caring much about its amount of education. "Ah, that is because you only see the pleasant side of it," Mr. Lamerel says to me. He is very highly educated, good man, and so are his children going to be. The girls (it is his pride) learn everything with their brothers. But, oh me, how heavy they all are! how it wears one out to spend an evening at the Rectory! whereas with those dear ignorant souls at the Mansion the moments flew.

It was July when the Beresfords came, so that they had still a good deal of the summer before them, and our young people did their duty in making them acquainted with all there was to be seen. They had brought a pony with them and a little carriage, not any bigger, and, I must say, very much more crazy and out of order than mine. The wheels had a jingle of their own, which distinguished Lady Louisa's pony-chaise to the whole neighborhood. It was this that was the nominal occupation of the boy who cooked the dinner, and a very clever boy he was. I have seen him myself in the yard, polishing the chaise as if his life depended on it. "Sure and it's joking my lady was," he answered, when somebody congratulated him one day on his various accomplishments. He blushed, though Lady Louisa did not. And so the quaint, funny, candid household got settled down in the midst of us. Beside Lady Denzil, who was our queen in a way, Lady Louisa looked like an old washerwoman: but notwithstanding all her good-nature, there was one point she was stiffer upon even than Lady Denzil. We were all gentry, fortunately, and people whom one could visit but nothing could be finer than the unconsciousness that came upon the lady of quality when an interloper of a lower order came in. She became blind, deaf, and stupid in a moment, though she was the very soul of good humor and kindness. This is a mystery I don't understand, though I am as fond of well-born people as anybody need be.

And alas! the autumn that the Beresfords came to the Green was the year that, after all his misdoings, Everard Stoke came home.

CHAPTER II.

EVERARD WAS Mrs. Stoke's eldest son: they were people of the very best connections, but poor—so poor that they had to live in a little cottage and practice the most rigid economy, though they "counted cousins" with half the people in the peerage. Everard had had every advantage in education, people thinking naturally that the eldest son was his mother's best prop, and that he would be glad to be able to help his own. And no doubt some boys are a help and comfort to every one belonging to them; just as there are others who

pull everybody down who has ever attempted to help them. He was meant to go into the Indian Civil Service, that being the best way, as many people think, for a young man to get on. But he would not be a Civil servant. He insisted on going into the army, where, of course, he knew he could never keep himself, much less help his family. I don't know what poor Mrs. Stoke, who was not a strong woman either in mind or body, was subjected to in the way of threats, and disobedience, and ill-temper, before she would consent. But she had to consent at last; and they got him a commission in a very nice regiment in the line. He wanted to be a Guardsman, the young fool! but of course her friends were not such idiots as that. I suspect Everard had thought of soldiering—for he was not much more than a boy, and could not be expected to have much sense—as nothing but a life of indolence and freedom, heaps of amusements and gay society. But when he found he had to obey as well as to command, it changed his ideas altogether. The way in which he tried to cover his insubordination at first was by calling his Colonel a snob, which he did whenever he came to see any of us. "His grandfather was a tailor," he would say; "fancy gentlemen having to be under a fellow like that!" He tried after a while to get his friends to arrange an exchange for him into a different regiment: but it happened to be just at the moment when Willie, the second boy, was going out to India, and no one could pay attention to Everard's grumbles. Then there came a dreadful explosion. Whether he refused to obey orders, or whether he was insolent to his commanding officer, one could never quite make out; but the result was that he was recommended to resign to avoid a court-martial. It was the 119th, and I knew one of the officers. His account was, that he never saw such an ill-conditioned cub. "Snob himself," said my friend with indignation; "our old Colonel is a man to be proud of. The little brute never obeyed an order in his life, and wouldn't—'twasn't in him. What business had his mother to be a widow? Oh yes, I suppose she couldn't help it: but she ought to have flogged the very life out of that little beggar all the same." Poor, gentle

Mrs. Stoke, to think of her whipping a boy! though I don't doubt it would have done him good.

So Everard came home, more or less disgraced, his chosen profession thrown away, or throwing him away. By that time he was one-and-twenty, and a dreadful life he led his poor mother and sisters, grumbling at every thing. They had nothing on the table fit to eat,—they had nothing decent to put on,—they made a fellow wretched with their long faces, &c., &c. Once he did me the favor to take me into his confidence, but was sufficiently startled by my answer not to try it again. Then by immense exertions—it was before the time of examinations for everything, and interest did a great deal—a place was got for him in one of the Government offices. When Mrs. Stoke asked my advice, I was against this step from the beginning, for what was a young man of his habits to do in London, where everything would tempt him to go astray? “Ah, you don't know my Everard,” said the misguided woman, with tears in her eyes. “He is very proud, I must confess. Yes, indeed, Mrs. Mulgrave, it is a grave fault, but all the Stokes are proud. How could he be expected to be superior to the character of the family? But he has no other faults, poor boy. I could trust him as I would trust one of the girls,” she said, drying her eyes. And I suppose, so strangely are people constituted, that she believed what she said.

Everard got the situation, and everything seemed to go well for a year or two. By degrees, he got quite out of the habit of coming to the Green. When he did come, they never could please him. When his poor mother remonstrated with him for neglecting her, he made her the cruelest answer. “You don't think I could stand the Green all by myself?” he said; “and what fellow would care to come down with me to a hole like this?” It was Lottie who told me, in her indignation; but Mrs. Stoke bore it all, and never made any sign. And then — It was a dreadful business; and nobody ever explained, in so many words, exactly how it was. It was not in the papers, which kept it from the knowledge of people out of society, at least. As for people in society, of course the papers are

nothing; and everybody knew. There was some public money that had to pass through his hands; and besides that, he was more than a thousand pounds in debt. It came upon the poor Stokes like a thunder-clap. That sort of thing is more dreadful to *us*, who have but a very little money, and that little our very own, than, I suppose, to mercantile people, who are used to have other people's money in their hands. He had to go away, with just a telegram to his poor mother that he was ruined, and that she would never see him more. Of course it was some days before we heard; but we all noticed and wondered at the strange commotion in the cottage, and poor Mrs. Stoke, more dead than alive, going and coming constantly to town. As soon as the first whisper got abroad I went to them at once, which was rather a bold thing to do, and might have been badly taken. But they knew me, and that I meant only to serve them; and that is what Lottie means when she speaks of the time when I stood by them in their trouble. They had to make great sacrifices to pay up what they could. I know Mrs. Stoke sold her pearls, which she had always clung to through all their poverty, for the sake of her girls. And they sent away one of their servants, and lived more plainly, and dined more poorly than ever. And Everard disappeared for a long time, like a man who has gone down at sea. It was long before they knew even if he were alive, or where he was. I cannot tell how he lived, or what he did with himself; but at the time I am writing of, everything had quieted down and been forgotten; and he came back. His poor mother, somehow, had still a remnant of belief in her boy, and wept over him as did the father of the prodigal—though Everard was far too much a young man of the period to have any confession on *his* lips. I don't believe he even said “I am sorry,” for all the dreadful trials he had dragged those poor women through. Oh, how many things such women have to bear that they cannot confide to their dearest friends! He took it all as a matter of course. He looked us all in the face, just so conscious of what we thought as to be defiant of our opinion. There had been no public stigma put upon

him, no prosecution, nor anything of that kind. And now that it had "blown over," as he thought, he had the audacity to come home.

There are some men who are more attractive in their first youth than at any other age; and some whom life so moulds and stimulates, that they who were stupid and disagreeable at twenty, are at thirty interesting men of the world. Everard had never been a nice boy. Fond as I am of young people, he was one to whom I could not open my heart. But when he came home at the time I mention, strongly prejudiced as I was against him, I could not but acknowledge that he was improved. His manners were better. One could not tell if it were false or if it were true. But it is more agreeable, all the same, to be listened to, and heard out, and have a deferential answer, than to be interrupted and contradicted. Then he had learned to talk, which was a new gift; and it was a rare gift on the Green. He had been to all sorts of places, and seen every kind of people; and whatever his motive might be (I do not pretend to guess it), he took the trouble at least to make himself agreeable. Though I have an antipathy beyond all expression for this kind of man—the being who has two or three fair starts, and always turns out a failure, and comes back upon the poor women "that own him," as Lady Louisa would have said—yet somehow I could not quite execute justice upon Everard. "He is sorry, though he does not say it," said his poor mother. "He is not one to say it; and his very coming back like this is like turning over a new leaf. Don't you think so, dear Mrs. Mulgrave?"

I could not commit myself to such a favorable judgment. But still one might hope he did mean better this time.

He was at home all the summer; and the impression he produced on our little community in general was much the same as on myself. We knew his story so well that it was needless repeating or opening it up again. We said to each other, "I wonder Everard Stoke has the assurance to come back; and what will his poor mother do with him?" And then we changed to "Everard Stoke has certainly improved—don't you think so?" And

at length somebody was so kind as to suggest that he was but nine and twenty, and that perhaps he might even yet do well. It will be easily understood that no distinct reference was made to his story so as to render it intelligible to a stranger. And the Beresfords had lived abroad a good deal, and had no connection with our district, and had heard nothing about it. This was how it happened that in a place where every detail of the business was known, Lady Louisa never heard of it. She knew, of course, that there was something. He had been in the army, and left it; he had been a wanderer on the face of the earth for a long while. But then so had she and all her family; so that did not seem so strange to her. He had been a little wild, or gone too fast, as people say,—in short, there was something. But that was all Lady Louisa knew. And we, foolish creatures as we were, not seeing an inch before us, thought it kinder not to rake up an old story. "If he gets the chance now, he may do well," we said to each other, and began to ask him to our houses. And then he amused us, which is so irresistible a spell in a dull country place. And we all agreed tacitly to take him on trial again, and ignore the sins of his youth.

All this preamble is necessary to explain how he got to meet Norah Beresford, in the familiar way which our small society made inevitable. I remember being startled, not long after they came, by the advanced state of their acquaintance, till Lottie explained to me that they were always meeting Norah in her walks, and had taken to making little expeditions together. "Everard is so kind, he always walks with us now," his sister said, with, as it seemed to me, just a touch of doubtfulness in her voice.

"That is very unlike Everard," said I, perhaps a little severely; which was a very foolish thing to say, for however much we may ourselves condemn our own, none of us like to hear another do it. Lottie flushed a little and turned upon me, as I might have known. "Everard has changed very much, Mrs. Mulgrave," she said; "he is not like the same. Indeed, I don't think *he is* the same; but of course old friends always remember the past and don't believe in the future, as we do."

"I think that is not quite fair to me, Lottie," I said; "but at all events I hope in the future with all my heart, and that your faith may be fully verified. No doubt he is much improved."

And thus my little representation was put a stop to. To be sure it was possible that Everard's kindness to his sisters might be one of the fruits of repentance. It was not like him, but still it was possible, and he was very much improved. But I can't say I quite liked, the moment after, to see him come along the road with his little sister Lucy, by way of chaperone, I suppose, and Norah by his side. It was her laugh, that sweet, fresh, mellifluous Irish laugh, that called my attention to them. And the two were talking very closely. Lucy, whose head was busy about other matters, tripped on before, and Everard was talking and Norah listening as—well, as people do. One knows when one sees, without requiring to explain. I saw the scene from my window, and immediately, on the spur of the moment, rushed out to the garden gate, and called to them to come in and have some tea. "I am sure you have been having a long walk, and you shall not pass my door," I said, with a playfulness that I did not feel. Norah was very willing, poor child; she meant no harm and knew no better. She came in to me as brightly as if my quiet house had been the gayest in the world. But her face did cloud over a little when Everard paused, and took off his hat, and excused himself. He had only meant to see Miss Beresford home, he said, and could not stay. He had letters to write. Norah's face clouded, and showed the cloud. She looked wistfully at him, as if, but for shame, she would have changed her mind, and gone home; and she looked reproachfully at me. But the thing was done, and could not be altered. "I dare say we shall meet to-morrow, somehow," she said to Lucy, as she kissed her—and so went in with me, in that cloudy condition, half smile, half tear, which was, of all others, the most natural aspect of the mobile Irish face.

"I should not have come in if I had known he would go away," said Norah frankly. "Ah, then, you won't be angry that I say it.

He was telling me something—I'd rather have heard it out, and had his company a little longer, than a dozen cups of tea."

"But the tea is better for you, my dear," said I, "though perhaps not a dozen cups."

"No, fun is best," said Norah, beginning to brighten out of the cloud. "I like to be amused above all things. You steady English, with your steady ways, you prefer being cull. But I am not an English girl, and I have been brought up abroad; I like to be amused."

"All the better," said I. "I like it too, and Everard Stoke *is* amusing. He is even interesting, sometimes, which is more surprising still."

"Why should it be surprising?" said Norah. "You all seem to speak as if you patronized Ever—Mr. Stoke, and made allowance for him, and all that; whereas," said the girl, flashing up into full animation, "there is not a man all about can hold a candle to him! Sure you know it as well as me! They are all old fogies, or young fogies, which are worse. I laugh at them till it makes me ill—and then I could cry to think one is never to see anything better than that, when up starts somebody suddenly out of the earth,—that is *fun*! Yes; he is fun, though you shake your head—and—interesting, and all that;—and then you English put on your solemn faces. Oh, I don't like you at all! I shall never like you! That is, you are an old dear, and a jewel, and I love *you*." It was a minute at least before I could free myself from Norah's embrace, which was as impulsive and vehement as herself.

"You may not like us, my dear," said I, "and yet you must acknowledge we are not very ill-natured, after all. We might have made it impossible for Mr. Stoke to have so much as seen you, if we had thought proper to make ourselves disagreeable; and I am not sure we ought not to have done so, after all."

"It can't matter to me one way or another," said Norah with a sudden blush; and then she put her arms round me again, and looked up in my face with her shining sunset eyes, and coaxed me in her mellow Irish tones. "Ah, then, Mrs. Mulgrave, darling! do tell

me all to myself—mamma shall never hear, nor any one. Tell me what he has done?"

"Norah, if I thought it was anything to you what he had done—" I began.

"Ah, then, and what could it be to me?" said Norah. "Did I ever see him till six weeks ago? Did I ever hear his name? But I like to know everything. I am fond of stories. I suppose he has been very naughty, poor fellow!" she said, with an inimitable fall of her voice. Love itself could not have been more pathetic. Perhaps, with all her *naïveté*, there was a touch of that delicious instinctive histrionic sense which made her face unconsciously suit the emotion of the moment; or else things were worse than I thought.

And even now I had not the courage to speak out—a thing I shall never forgive myself. I had not the heart to throw the first stone at him, and he trying, or appearing to try, to amend. I thought what I did say would be enough to frighten her. I made a little fancy sketch of his insubordination, and how he had to leave his regiment, and then of his getting into debt and—being obliged to go away. The way she kept smiling at me, undismayed—the clear golden gleams, unsubdued by any cloud, out of her eyes—the proud way she held her head, never a droop of shame or even doubt in it—ought to have warned me to cut nothing out of the picture. I don't know now how it was I could have been so foolish. I had not the heart to shame him in the girl's eyes. When I had ended I watched her very closely, more anxious how she should take it than I could tell. But she took it in a way I never would have dreamed of. She jumped up from her chair and clapped her hands.

"Now that is the kind of man I love," she said. "His Colonel was a frightful old wretch. He bore it as long as he could, but that was not forever. The idea of shaking your head at a man for that! And then his independence—going away to hide his poverty from his friends, and making a living for himself with nobody to help him! I think it was grand! I knew I was right to like Everard Stoke. Ah now, how can I call him *Mister*. Don't you all say Everard? That's for telling me," she said, suddenly giving me a vehement

kiss. "Hush, whisper—I'm so glad. I thought it was something about some girl—"

"Oh, my dear Norah!" I cried; but she spoke so fast, and was in such a flood of talk, that it was impossible for me to go on.

"You never talk of such things before us," said Norah in her excitement, "but we always hear a word now and again that sets us wondering. Priscilla and I made sure it was about some girl. They say men are like that. I could have forgiven him, for you know he must have been so young. But I am glad—I can't tell you *how* glad—that it was only getting into debt and that sort of thing. Why, that's nothing. We are all in debt, every one," said Norah, with a laugh of half hysterical emotion. "Papa owes—I can't tell how much—and that's one reason why we are never at home."

"Oh, my dear, don't tell me any more," cried I, in a fright; "and Norah, stop and think before you say you are glad. He is nothing to you, and can never be anything to you; but all the same, you ought to estimate him justly. Everard Stoke has been a bad son and a bad brother—he has been—"

"And what did they ever do for him?" said Norah, with a toss of her head in defiance. "Why should he take them up on his shoulders when they don't want it? You are seeing with their eyes, and not your own nice kind ones, Mrs. Mulgrave, dear."

"And whose eyes are *you* seeing with, poor child?" I said. "He has been a burden upon them, and he has neglected them, Norah. You can't think how he has neglected them, and they always so careful of all his tastes—always so tender to him."

"They never understood him," said Norah hotly, with quick tears of vexation springing into her eyes. She had come to that last defense in which the faithless and cruel intrench themselves. And when she reached that point, her excitement, which was not under control, as it would have been with a girl more used to self-restraint, burst into tears. I stood looking on, very serious, even rueful, not attempting to comfort her. And next moment she sprang up with a wild outburst of laughter, and dried her eyes.

"Not that I care one bit," she said, "not

one bit ;—what should it matter to me ? But only he has been telling me things, and I'm so glad they are quite true. There, Mrs. Mulgrave, dear, that's all. You shall never hear me speak of Ever—Mr. Stoke again."

"I hope not, my dear," I said very gravely, giving her my hand.

"You may be quite sure. What can it matter to me?" said Norah. "We're strangers, you know, and wild Irish. After a while we'll go away and disappear into Italy or somewhere. I know papa's ways. If one of us girls doesn't marry Colonel Fitzgerald," Norah continued, looking up at me with one of her doubtful looks, half fun, half pathos. She knew that she might have to do this, strange as it sounded, should Colonel Fitzgerald throw his handkerchief at her, and yet she could not help seeing the humor of the situation, such as it was.

I confess I was so mean that I went up stairs to my bed-room window, and watched her walk all the way home. Probably the same idea that was in my mind had been in Norah's, for she certainly paused and looked round, as with some ghost of an expectation. But Everard was too wise for that. He was not going to follow her at such a moment under my watchful eyes. Of course, if one had chosen to inquire, there was pretty sure to be "something about some girl" in his dark existence. But it had never been my business to accuse him, or investigate his sins; was it my business now?

I asked myself this question till it became a pain to me. Was I my brother's keeper? Ah,—but the question sounds different when it is my little sister's keeper—the child that one sees on the edge of a precipice. It gave me a bad headache and a great deal of trouble before I could make out what I ought to do. And what I decided upon was no better than a compromise, a worldly proceeding. I made up my mind to go to his mother and speak about it to her. Norah had no money that I knew of, and though she had good connections, they were but a poor people to lean upon. He could have no motive for the part he was playing, and would surely give it up when he understood the circumstances.

With this lingering hope in my mind I got

up next morning full of my purpose, and went to the cottage to have an interview with Mrs. Stoke.

CHAPTER III.

"This is carrying things a great deal too far," said Mrs. Stoke, in her offended and stately tone. "I know you mean well, dear; but why should my boy take any trouble about such a girl as Norah Beresford? With his connections, he might look a great deal higher. She has not a penny; and her family is good, of course, but a poor Irish family. It would be nothing to us to marry into the Clantorry connection. It certainly is not worth Everard's while. I know you speak from good motives——"

"Oh, mamma! how can you talk to *her* so?" cried Lottie. "Have you forgotten? Dear Mrs. Mulgrave, mamma will never hear anybody say a word about Everard, you know."

"I don't want to say a word," I answered. "I never thought he wished to marry her; and it is for his own sake as well as hers that I speak. If he should go too far, and it should get known, people will speak of the past; and I am sure, for one, I do not want that to be raked up again."

"But you do it," said Mrs. Stoke, sitting down to cry. "I was thinking nothing about the past, for the moment; and you have gone and brought it all back."

I stood quite still while my victim cried. I own that I felt intensely uncomfortable. What business had I to interfere? Was it not the best thing to leave it alone, and let each one take care of his own affairs? I to make Everard's mother cry, with so many real things in his life to vex her! I was angry with myself.

"But, mamma," said Lottie, after a pause, "Everard never did consider anything but his own pleasure, all his life. You and I ought to know that."

"You are always the one to turn against him," said her mother. But it was not so easy to silence Lottie as me.

"Ever since the time when he would break our dolls," said Lottie, with a little bitterness. "If he liked it, he would break Norah's heart in the same way, and throw the fragments

from him. Do you mean to say you do not know your own son, after all these years?"

"Oh, Lottie, how cruel you are to me!" cried Mrs. Stoke. That was all the satisfaction I could get. I begged them not to tell Everard, so as to rouse his vanity; but only to dissuade him, lest people should talk. And then I went home with the discouraging sense, for one thing, that Lottie agreed with me, and the feeling that I had sown dispeace among them—not a pleasant thought.

Next time I saw the Beresfords after this, I found Lady Louisa, with her two daughters, in a considerable state of excitement.

"Me dear, it's the Colonel we're expecting," she said; "and I don't deny I am fluttered a little when I think of the importance it may be to *them*, poor things. For let me tell you, me dear ma'am, ten thousand a year does not go begging every day to a couple of poor girls without a penny; and I'd have them mind what they're about."

"Then is he coming——?" said I, and stopped short, confounded; for had he been coming, like a French gentleman on his promotion, to see the *fiancée* his friends had looked out for him, Lady Louisa could not have been more straightforward in her speech.

"He is coming," said Norah, "like the man in the story, to see which of the two sisters he will like best; and one will be very fine, in full dress, to make the best of herself. And the other will be in her high frock, ready to run about after dinner is over. And he'll turn round from the one that was got up all ready for him, and he'll say to the papa, 'I'll have the one with her clothes on, please.' That's how it will be."

"If it's me you mean, Norah," Miss Beresford began, with a little flash of spirit, "nobody ever saw me with my dress falling off my shoulders; though I don't sit down to dinner like a tomboy that must always be running about."

"Ah, then, don't be vexed, Prissy dear," said Norah. "It was only for fun. If one couldn't make fun of it, one would be furious," cried the little vixen, suddenly clenching her hands. "The man—the brute! coming to look at us to see which he will buy, and man-

ma talking and settling what we're to wear, as if it were all right."

"Don't get to quarreling over him already, me dears," said Lady Louisa, with perfect calm. "Is it the man I'm thinking of? Sure the man might go to Russia, for anything I care; but he's got ten thousand a year, me children, and why should it go past our door more than another's, if I can help it?—and as nice a place as ever I set eyes on," she added, with a sigh, "in county Wicklow, me own county. And the comfort it would be to see one of ye there."

"But unless people—like each other," said I, seeing it was my turn to say something, "even a nice place would not make them happy—" and broke off here like a fool, having made my little conventional speech.

"A nice place goes a long way, me dear ma'am," said Lady Louisa, with that mellow, warm Irish worldliness, which somehow does not feel so abhorrent as the ordinary type; "and it does you a vast deal of good, take me word for it, to have plenty of money. They never knew what that was, poor things. We're poor, and we've always been poor, and I'm not ashamed of it. But I'll never let me children go and throw themselves away. If ye marry beauty, it's but skin-deep," continued this philosopher; "and as for wit and brains, and all that, it's pleasant, but where's the good of it? But sure, when ye marry money, ye know what you are doing; and that's a consolation, at the least. I'm thinking, me dear ma'am, as you've all been so kind and hospitable to us, to make a little effort to repay ye, now me friends are in town. We can't give but very small dinners in this bit of a place, which is a pity. But I'm thinking of a series of tays."

"Mamma," said Priscilla in an undertone, with a blush and look of horror. Their mother was too ready-witted, however, to correct herself.

"'Of tays.' Is it too Irish I am?" she said, with her round, pleasant laugh. "The first of them is this day week, me dear lady—and I hope to see the Colonel and some of the officers; and if the young ones like to amuse themselves on the lawn—sure, it wants to be well cut first," she added, breaking off;

"and I hope you won't forget to tell Patrick's children. In a general way I like to see the grass grow, me dear ma'am—I'm fond of nature, though I'll allow it's a strange taste—and I hope we shall have the honor of Mrs. Mulgrave's company," said Lady Louisa, with a gracious bow. "But if I were you I'd tell Patrick at once, me dears, before you forget," she added, turning to Norah. Patrick was the famous stable-boy who was of so much use in the cooking; and certainly such a lawn for the young people to amuse them-

selves upon, I never saw. The grass must have been ankle-deep at least.

Norah, however, did not move. She had some object of her own in following out this conversation. "If you mean dancing, mamma," she said, "there are plenty of ladies—but I don't know where the men are to come from, unless you mean the Colonel to order down his whole regiment."

Poor Norah! I saw in a moment that this little speech was made to call forth the mention of one name.

(To be continued.)

OUR LABOR-SYSTEM AND THE CHINESE.

It is impossible to deal justly with the Chinese labor question without a fair examination of our entire labor-system.

The United States, in their relations to labor, stand alone among all the countries of the earth. The very principles of freedom and equality, upon which we depend for our cohesion, are adverse to a practical labor-system. Whereas other nations find their labor-market supplied by the peasant order, or by a system of serfdom or slavery, we have no such resource, and are forced to look abroad for paid substitutes for those who, in other countries, are presumed to feel some slight interest in the land and people they serve.

We have no peasantry; and since our native-born population have been disinclined to turn their attention to menial labor, it has followed that we must look for assistance to the refuse population of older and overcrowded countries, in order that we might develop the resources of our own.

Hitherto we have found no difficulty in supplying our need, in so far as quantity has been concerned. Mere bone and muscle were to be had for the asking; and in millions we have asked and received. While the land needed only those elements for its development, this was all very well.

But the simple fact of our own isolation from menial pursuits has left us free to advance in other directions; and the result has been, that in the short space of a century we

have won a position equal to that of nations enriched by the achievements of a thousand years. Meanwhile our labor-system has not kept pace with us. While the lords of the soil have progressed intellectually, the tillers have remained stagnant upon the same plane which they occupied at the period of the first immigration.

This would be all well enough, if it were not that inventive genius and intellectual power require instruments of some mental capacity to make them profitable. The truth is, that while, in the first period of our existence, we needed only brute force, and the muscular power that could fell trees and hoe potatoes, now we must have intellectual and skilled labor to utilize our inventions, to develop our manufactures, and to enrich our land with intelligent agriculture. Agriculture, horticulture, and manufacture, which were at first conducted with a view to absolute necessity, are now followed, in a degree, as fine arts, needing all the adjuncts which the mind can offer to advance them.

For such advancement our present labor-system is incompetent; and this leads to the first proposition to be offered in this article, viz.: that *our present labor-system is intellectually inadequate to the necessities of the people and the capacity of the country and period.*

Again, not only has our labor-system failed to advance in value and capacity with our advancing resources; not only is it a dead-weight upon invention and improvement; but it has

course of time by quiet inaction ; developing in the meanwhile the arts, sciences, and manufactures. They enjoy a splendid literature, boast a glorious history ; and if the traveler notices a deficiency of public works and a lack of progress in all that relates to practical and daily life, he must recollect that it is the

nature of despotism to deaden the life-blood of its subjects ; that the country must be viewed in this light ; that the blame must not be cast upon a quiet and inoffensive race, but must fall upon those whose repressive rule suggests such striking comparisons with free and liberal constitutions.

NORAH : THE STORY OF A WILD IRISH GIRL.

BY MRS. OLIPHANT,

AUTHOR OF "MISS MARJORIBANKER," "JOHN," ETC.

(Continued from page 61.)

CHAPTER III, (Continued.)

"WELL, find the men, me dear child," said Lady Louisa. "There's some at the Lodge with old Sir Thomas, and there's that nephew of the Admiral's—and your friend Everard Stoke. They're great friends, Mrs. Mulgrave, though you'll be shocked to hear me say it. I don't interfere with me girls when they're but amusing themselves. Norah knows it's a thing can go no further. He has good connections and knows the world, but I don't suppose he's got a penny. I know me girls' principles, Mrs. Mulgrave, and how far I can trust them ; and why shouldn't they amuse themselves, poor things, so long as they know how far to go ?"

"Yes," said I with a little eagerness, while Norah watched me, growing pale ; "but though it may be safe enough for them, it may be hard upon—the young men." Heaven knows I did not care in this case for the young men—but what was one to say ?

"Ah then, he'll take care of himself," said Lady Louisa lightly. "He's no fool, me dear ma'am, and you may be sure he'd never believe I'd throw away one of me girls on a well-bred beggar, for sure that's what it comes to. When people have lived in the world all their lives they understand each other.—Norah, go and tell the boy.—Me dear, I wouldn't speak before the child, but ye may make your mind easy. If it was a young curate or any of the school-boy sort, I'd put a stop to it—but they're both well born, and they're both beggars as ye may say, and better

brought up than to think of any nonsense, except amusing themselves,—there's no harm in that."

"But, mamma, I do think," said Priscilla, coming up to us hastily, "since Norah is not here—"

"Me child, ye were born a little old woman, and ye don't understand," said Lady Louisa. "Let her alone. I've got me eye on them. He's very pleasant, I don't deny, and if he had a good income, and his character more settled—"

"But, indeed, I fear it is not at all settled," said I. "Dear Lady Louisa, I have no confidence in his principles—I don't know if you will let me say so."

"My dear lady, men are but men," said Lady Louisa, turning her back on her elder daughter, and giving me a series of little comical nods. "We don't talk of such things before the girls, but ye can't mend the creatures, and ye must just swallow them as they are. Sure, when I can't answer for me own boys, I've nothing to do with casting stones at Everard Stoke. Hush ! Mrs. Mulgrave and I are consulting about cups and saucers, me dear," she added in a louder tone, turning again to the table. I dare say all the same Priscilla heard ; and Norah too, for that matter, who came in after doing her errand to the stable-boy, with a preoccupation such as had never been seen before in her sunset eyes.

"Are you gossiping about our neighbors ?" said Norah, with a kind of sneer which did not become her, except, indeed, that it qui-

vered on her lip as if that soft Cupid's bow had been too tightly strung.

"Ah, then, and shouldn't we like it above everything?" said Lady Louisa; "but you see Mrs. Mulgrave's going, me dears—and not vexed at all your nonsense, I hope. What are they but children, me dear lady, and their poor mother's companions, and always brought up to speak out their mind."

"And Irish!" cried Norah, as she went with me to the door. "Does not that mean everything that is indiscreet?" But the girl did not leave me when she had opened the door for me. She snatched up her hat as she passed, and followed me out, calling my attention, in the candid way which belonged to the family, to the state of the lawn, as long as we were within hearing of the open windows. "I own!" she said, "if it were a haymaking mamma meant to give, it would be more suitable, and greater fun too." Then Norah lowered her voice, and approached me closely, with an anxious glance. "Did you tell mamma about him," she said, "when I was gone? I know you told mamma."

I did not make her any answer. I looked her very closely in the face and shook my head. "Oh Norah—" I began.

"Nothing more—don't say anything more," cried the girl. "I know what you mean when you say 'Oh Norah!' Is it so bad as that? you mean to say; and I tell you it is not bad at all, Mrs. Mulgrave. I know *all*—he has told me all, poor fellow, and I am so sorry for him. It does not matter to me—or rather, he is my friend and it does matter—but not in the way you think. Only because people are so queer and so prejudiced, I would not have you tell mamma."

"Then you ought to save him from what may be coming upon him," said I. "If Lady Louisa is going to have a number of people from town, how can you insure that there will not be somebody who knows all—better than you do—somebody who might expose him, which is what I don't want to do—for everybody knew," I said.

It seemed incomprehensible that on this spot, where the very earth seemed to have thrilled with the story of Everard Stoke's ill-doings, an innocent young creature like this

should be standing all flushed and eager to defend him. And knowing all, as she said.

She had grown very pale as I spoke. "Expose him?" she said, in a tremulous, almost whispering voice, and then shook her head as if with an effort to shake off the effect of my words. "I don't understand what you mean,—but I will ask nobody but himself," she cried—"nobody but himself. He must answer for himself."

I do not know how much longer Norah would have held me there talking about it, but I saw how vain it was. And Patrick made his appearance from the stable-yard with a big scythe, bigger than himself, over his shoulder. Mowing-machines were not so common then as they are now, and even had they been more general, I don't think anything but the primitive method of getting rid of the grass would have been adopted at the Mansion. The impatient girl saw the approach of the man of all work with an irritation which almost looked like temper. "I did not say you were to begin this very minute, when there are people here," she cried, and caught at my hand to stop me. "Wait, Mrs. Mulgrave; I am going with you a little way."

I do not know what I could have done to free myself of her if she had persevered, and it may be supposed that I had little desire to receive any confidences from Norah, or to argue with her in her present state of mind. It was the stable-boy who came to my assistance—a novel, unexpected auxiliary. "Sure, Miss Norah, and it's them as will be tired waiting for you at the gate."

Norah gave me a terrified glance and grew scarlet, and then she turned upon the lad with a kind of fury. "Them? Who? and who gave you leave to speak?" she cried, wild with vexation. Perhaps there was enough in that glance to give the lad his instructions, or perhaps his ready wit suggested the explanation.

"I ask your pardon, Miss Norah. Sure it's the young ladies from the Cottage—who else?"

The blush was still burning on her face when Norah turned and left me. She gave me a little nervous nod, and muttered some-

thing, I do not know what, and I know she turned round when she had gone a little way, to see if I was looking after her. Poor child! Because I objected to Everard I had become her enemy. She feared me and distrusted me, though I was, as I believed, the only one who tried to save her. Could his sisters be aiding Everard in this piece of selfish villainy? The question had scarcely risen in my mind when I saw Lottie Stoke coming to meet me. Then it became evident that it must be a lie—and Patrick could not have had his story so ready had it been the first time that any one had waited for Norah at the other gate.

I had no heart to speak to Lottie when she came up. All I could say to myself was that I wished I could glide through the world taking interest in nobody, letting people look after their own affairs, and minding my own business. But then my own business is so very trifling in this world, and one can't help loving people—no, nor even disliking people, though that perhaps is wrong—I will not go so far as to say hating, for that would not be true.

"Now you have been seeing Norah," said Lottie Stoke, "and I hope you have been more successful on that side."

"I have nothing to do with Norah," I said a little sharply. "I am neither her mother nor her keeper. She—and others—so far as I can see, must please themselves."

"Ah, that's what Everard is doing," said Lottie, "what he always did all his life. Of course he can't marry—even if she were rich I don't believe he would ever think of marrying. He is only amusing himself. There are times when I could shoot him, though he is my brother—or kick him, which is worse," cried Lottie, with sharp contempt.

"She is amusing herself too," said I. "Never mind; she knows she must marry money, and she knows her mother would never look at such a man. Why should we vex ourselves that have nothing to do with it? Let them amuse themselves. They ought to know their own meaning best."

"But it will make people talk, as you said, and we shall hear that dreadful story all raked up again," said Lottie, with sudden tears.

"Oh, I can't help it—I am out of my senses, and they only encourage him in all his doings at home."

And I had to take her in with me, and comfort her, and show her that I could do nothing—which was very poor comfort, either to her or to me.

CHAPTER IV.

THIS tragical undercurrent which ran on all through Lady Louisa's preparations for her parties made the fun of them less enjoyable, to me at least, though the Green in general made mighty merry over the series of tays. When the lawn was mowed by Patrick it looked so much like a hayfield from which the crop had just been removed that a glance of dismay had momentarily overwhelmed Lady Louisa's delightful confidence. But she soon recovered. "Sure it's in the country," she said. "It's Nature—what can ye expect? Young Everton, my Cousin Fascal's eldest son, a charming, handsome young fellow and the best of sons, was in raptures with it. He'd have Norah take him to see the moon. 'Nonsense, my young friend,' said I 'it's rheumatism will go with you, and not Norah.' For, me dear ma'am, the family's poor, and the boy must marry money like the rest of them. It's not I would be such a bad friend to him as to throw me pretty daughter in his way."

"Indeed, when nothing can come of it, I think it is wrong, very wrong," said I, with emphasis which made Lady Louisa stare.

"And that is true," she said, with vague surprise. "It is one of the things I will never allow. When a young man owes it to his family to make a marriage of a certain kind, it's cruel, it's downright barbarity, me dear ma'am, to go poking your pretty girls into the poor boy's way. There was Lord Muddleton's boy that went all wrong—there's been some intermarriages between his family and ours, but I own I can't tell ye the connection—I would not have let that boy so much as see me child; it would have gone against me conscience, but if you'll believe me, there was a woman, an aunt of his own, the fool, left him with one of the Dermotts, a pretty creature without a penny, and the

next thing his poor parents heard of it he was engaged. And sure they married and came to a bad end. I have my ambition for me children, Mrs. Mulgrave. Not under a hundred thousand for me boys, and for me poor girls, ye know, what Heaven may send them. Isn't it all the business that's left me in life?"

And yet next minute she was chatting with Everard Stoke, who came with the pretense of some message from his sisters. He had taken to calling at the Mansion for some days past, since the day when Patrick betrayed his presence at the other gate. Probably Norah had been alarmed in spite of herself by that strange sensation of discovery, and the tingle of shame which had scorched her cheeks, and had put a stop to those half clandestine, half accidental meetings. And accordingly he took to calling openly, and amused Lady Louisa and told her bits of scandal. "The men fish up everything at their clubs, ye know," she said; and none of us had the courage to tell her that Everard Stoke, in spite of his good connections, had managed to banish himself forever from that condition in which clubs are possible.

There was a good deal of excitement on the Green about the first of the series of tays, and Heaven knows some of us had good occasion to remember the day. The only sensible one of the Stokes did not take as she should have done my suggestion on the subject. I advised her with all my might to persuade Everard not to go. "There are people coming from the town," I said, "and how can he tell whom he may meet? Anybody from his old office—any of his old friends. You know how disagreeable it would be." "Men are not brutes," said Lottie, indignantly, "at least not young men in society. Even if there did happen to be some one there, they would not have the heart to make any scene. And beside, people forget, when they don't happen to be friends and take an interest in one," poor Lottie said, with a little bitter meaning. I took no notice of her unkindness, poor child. It is very true that people forget when you don't much care for their recollection, but a secret rarely dies out, especially if there is shame in it. It hangs

about in the general memory—a sort of shadow—and with one individual here and there always lives keen enough and sharp enough to defy oblivion. This has always been my experience, at least.

I dressed to go to Lady Louisa's on that particular evening with a thrill of presentiment. I knew something was going to happen. Whether it might take the special form I feared, of course no one could say, but I felt that somehow a storm was coming. And I don't think I was alone in thinking so. There was a flush on Norah's face, which, as a rule, was almost too pale, and a tremulous expression about her nostril and movement of her lip, which showed me that she, too, was full of the excitement of a crisis. Lottie Stoke, on the other hand, had lost all her color. The soft English rose on her cheeks had fled before the breath of this emotion, her eyes looked out of her face large and anxious, with a certain dilatation about them like stars in a summer night, when they seem positively projecting out of the sky. Not a soul entered the room who was not noted from head to foot by Lottie. She had been angry with me for warning her, but yet my warning had not been in vain. Everard, on the contrary, was perfectly charming—I never saw him look so well, nor talk so well, nor make himself so agreeable. We ladies on the Green, *who knew all about it*, absolved him, I am sure, finally that night. "You can't imagine, you know, that he ever did anything dishonorable. It's not in nature," said Mrs. Damerel, who had never been one of his friends, to me. As for the party, it was just like other parties, I am sorry to say. There was really nothing original about it, except that it was the first of a series of tays. If it had been called an evening party, like other people's, we should all have yawned in corners behind our fans, as one generally does. There were a few men down from town, but they had come to dinner, and were still sitting over their wine when we all assembled. I suppose they did not think us worth their while. We had all got shaken together, and the music and the talk had begun to get lively, and our usual groups were forming—for of course, being all so intimate

with each other, we naturally fell into groups—when at last they began to come in. I don't know whether Everard was at all nervous himself, but at all events he kept away behind the old grand piano in a corner, turning over the music, and whispering to Martha Foster in a way which I could see Norah did not at all like. She was quite flushed and excited, poor child. Though I watched her so closely, I did not know half of what had occurred to excite her. But as soon as Colonel Fitzgerald came in, I saw one thing—that it was Norah at whom he had thrown his handkerchief. Priscilla, more like a little hen than ever, was at the other end of the room trying to amuse the dull people, who generally fall into a heap together at such gatherings, but it was to Norah's side that the Colonel betook himself. He bent over her, being a very tall man, and talked, and evidently did his very best to entertain her. He even placed himself so, standing before her, that nobody else could get near the girl. It might be because they had all claimed him as a relative, which gives a man courage, or perhaps because he had a contempt for us mere country people, but certain it was that he monopolized Norah in a very significant way—too significant for a party. Poor Norah received these attentions with anything but satisfaction. Her color came and went, her natural fun and nonsense seemed all at an end. When she answered him it was only with a word or two. Sometimes she would give a frightened glance towards Lady Louisa, sometimes to where Everard stood by the piano, now with one girl, now with another. It was evident to me that she was afraid of them both—afraid of exciting Everard to jealousy, afraid of alarming her mother, vexed and annoyed at the ostentatious attentions of the man by her side. She gave even me an appealing glance, as if praying me to come and help her; but I could not take that upon me in Lady Louisa's house, and knowing what her wishes were. Old Ferns, the butler, and Patrick, the wonderful stable-boy, in a livery coat too long for him, were handing round the tea while this little scene was going on. Colonel Fitzgerald was the first of the gentlemen to leave the dining-room;

the others were just beginning to straggle in.

"Give me your arm, Mr. Stoke," said Lady Louisa all at once; and notwithstanding the hum of talk, and all the murmur of the room, Norah heard it and so did I. "Give me your arm; I want to introduce you to my cousin, Lady Fascally. I want ye to tell her about the Dorchesters. She's been spending the winter in Naples and knows them well."

Lady Louisa ran on, but I did not make out what she was saying more. Everard coming towards her turned his face full upon all the assembly, including the gentlemen who were coming in at the door. I don't know if he had already seen that he had something to dread, or if a mere vague fear, communicated somehow in the atmosphere from us women who were afraid, had crept over him. He was very pale and very grave, like a man turning his face towards visible danger. I cannot say that he was a handsome man, but there was something about him of that charm which is more attractive than beauty.

As Norah turned towards her mother, Colonel Fitzgerald naturally turned too; and started, to my dismay, with a muttered exclamation, "By Jove!" Everard came in with Lady Louisa on his arm, passing close by them. He had swept the whole room with his eyes, and it was evident that he had collected himself for the encounter. "Ah, Fitzgerald, how d'ye do?" he said lightly as he passed. Colonel Fitzgerald did not answer a word; he stood like a man scared, biting his moustache with a kind of convulsive energy. It was he who was silenced and put down, and not Everard. He collapsed altogether, and stood staring before him, and did not seem to have another word to say.

Then Norah turned to me over the arm of her sofa—turned right round, and gave me a triumphant look. "Do you see?" her eyes said; "Which is the victor now?" But at this moment something else occurred. A sudden hush fell on the room, nobody knew why; and then there came a voice quite distinct above everything else, as if it were the only voice in the room. "Good God!" it said, "That fellow here!" Not much certainly to make such a commotion, but it froze

Norah into ice as she sat with her head turned round to look at me. I turned too, and so did everybody. It was a fat little man in a white waistcoat who had uttered that exclamation. He was standing direct in Everard's way, stopping him. Lady Louisa had dropped his arm and was begging the gentlemen not to quarrel, and inquiring what was the matter,—while young Everton stepped forward and stood before Lady Fascally, who had been frozen into ice too, with the smile which she had put on to receive Everard petrifying on her lips.

"Don't quarrel, me friends," said Lady Louisa, in her perturbation. "Sir Charles, me dear man, sit down and be quiet, for Heaven's sake. Sure and nobody wants to know what it's about. Mr. Stoke, he's an old man and no credit to fight. Go and sit down by Norah yonder, and talk to the child, and for goodness' sake let us have no more."

"I will obey you, Lady Louisa," said Everard; his eyes gave one flash and he made the short stranger a bow, and turned and came straight up to Norah. "Come into the conservatory and look at the flowers," he said, offering her his arm; "It is your mother who sends me." It all passed with such rapidity that no one could interfere. Norah turned to him as if by compulsion, not as if she had any will of her own. She rose up to her feet trembling, and grew deadly pale, as if she were going to faint—but made a clutch at his arm and saved herself. Colonel Fitzgerald for his part made a movement in a confused, heavy-dragoon way, having only half recovered his senses, as if to interfere between them. "Pardon me, it is Lady Louisa who sent me," said Everard. He was a little pale, but quite calm, and knew what he was about, which no one else in the room did. There was even a touch of scorn in his voice as he passed the heavy, astonished soldier. "By Jove!" was all Colonel Fitzgerald could say. And Everard led the poor child away, as white as her dress, through the people at the other end of the room, who had not heard much of the disturbance (if it could be called a disturbance). His mother called to him softly as they passed, "What is it, Everard? for God's sake," she cried, poor woman. I shall

never forget his answer: "Nothing, mother," he said, with the quietest voice, "except that Lady Louisa has sent me to take Norah out for a breath of fresh air. It is so hot—that is all."

I had risen, I could not tell why, and was following them with a vague terror I could not express, when Mrs. Stoke grasped my dress, all trembling, and drew me to a chair beside her. "What has happened? Tell me, for God's sake," she said. What could I do? Lady Louisa had authorized him to go to her daughter. Norah had trusted herself with him. How was I to interfere? I sat down beside his mother, watching the door of the tiny conservatory which had closed upon them. All this passed in about five minutes from the instant when Lady Louisa took Everard's arm. I told his mother all I knew, which was nothing, and then I rose, being too nervous to keep still. I would have gone after them into the conservatory at all hazards, but that I saw some others of the young people going. And what could I do? I returned to my old seat, which was near Lady Louisa. I found her in an unmistakable flutter. Colonel Fitzgerald and the little man in the white waistcoat were standing by her, and the group was made up by Mr. Beresford and Lady Fascally, who still sat petrified in the background, with her son in front of her in defence.

"No better than a swindler," said the fat man. "Took the money, Lady Louisa, ay, and spent it, too, and disappeared, as they mostly do. If I had been told that I should meet that fellow in your house, giving you his arm, I should have sworn that it was impossible. On my honor, I could not believe my eyes."

"And driven out of the regiment, by Jove," said Colonel Fitzgerald, into his moustache. "Sent to Coventry."

"God bless me, don't make such a fuss about it, me dear friends," said Lady Louisa, fanning herself violently. "Sure I thought he'd been wild, like the rest of the young men. It's a mistake, that's all, and if me Lady Denzil received the poor boy, why shouldn't I? Don't go make a fuss and upset me party. I'll have nothing more to say to him, I promise

ye. Ah, now, Mr. Beresford, can't ye go and look after your guests? What a thing to have happen to me, me dear," Lady Louisa said, with a half sob, as she dropped into a chair beside her cousin. She was a woman who was always very audible at all times, and it had not occurred to her to lower her voice.

"What an awkward, disagreeable thing to have happened to me."

"More than awkward, Louisa," said Lady Fascally, who was a sly woman of quality; "I should ask these ladies what they mean by it, if I were you."

"Me dear," said Lady Louisa, "it's clear enough what they mean by it. The boy's reformed, and is young, with good connections, and he's amusing, the poor young creature. I feel for them, poor things. And sure our own boys, me dear, they're not saints. As for spending money, there's me second—and not so particular where he'd get it neither. Me heart aches for the poor boy."

"You had all but presented him to me," said Lady Fascally, with her petrified air.

"Ah, then, me dear, and what harm could he have done ye?" said the softer woman. "After all, it's not Don Juan he is," Lady Louisa added, with a low mellow laugh; the shock had not fallen very severely on her, and the success of her "tay" was more important than Everard. Then her eye fell on me, and she seized upon me on the spot to amuse her difficult relation.

"Talk it all over, me dear ma'am, and tear the boy to pieces, and I'll be everlastingly obliged to you;" but still the mother said not a word about Norah, whom she had trusted to him—not a look of anxiety, or even of discomposure, was on her face, and I tried to speak, but she was gone, leaving me to amuse her friends.

It was a very hard business; and as Lady Fascally, being a great lady, kept solemn possession of her chair, I had to await the arrival of another victim before I could get free. The night went on, to me at least, like a feverish dream; there was music, there was laughter, and the everlasting sound of Lady Fascally's fine talk, and yet she and all the rest looked like so many ghosts. I never saw Norah return out of that conservatory; she

might have done so, perhaps, when my back was turned, or she might have come into the house another way; she might have gone upstairs to her room with a headache, as Norah sometimes did, I knew, or she might—could she? was it possible?—be wandering about the garden with Everard, listening to what wild talk the excitement of the moment might have put into his selfish mind. With such a generous, undisciplined, impulsive creature the one thing was as likely as the other, and what was certain was, that I saw her no more that night. "She has got into a row with her mamma," I heard Susy Stoke whisper to another, "and gone off to bed."

But I had no confidence in Susy Stoke. And it was with a most miserable mind, not knowing what to think, that I got up to follow Lady Denzil when she and Sir Thomas said good night. Priscilla was standing near her mother, white as a ghost. "Are you very tired?" I said to her, longing to say something more. "Tired to death," the poor little woman answered, looking piteously up in my face, as if asking *me* the question I longed to ask her. But Lady Louisa was just as cheerful as ever. "Thank you, me dear ma'am," she said, as she bade me good-night, with a comic glance at her grand relation, such as Irish eyes know so well how to give. And when the child's mother was so perfectly composed, what right had any one else to be anxious? That is what I said to myself as I went, miserable, home.

CHAPTER V.

It was still early when I got home—not more than half-past eleven; for the party had been disturbed, and everybody was glad to get away. I went upstairs and put on my dressing-gown, and came down again, not feeling ready for bed. A summer night is a cheerless thing at such a moment. When one feels wakeful in winter one comes down to the fire, and that is always company. But the lamp is not sufficient lustre to a room when there is nobody in it but one. And shadows seem to get into the corners—shadows that look as if they might take form sometimes and come and sit by one's side. I came into the dim room feeling very unhappy.

It was dimmer than usual that night; my maid had placed a shade over the lamp, so that there was but one brilliant spot on the table, and all the rest was in darkness. Outside it was a lovely moonlight night; but when one is alone, and past the age for that, the lamplight comes more natural than the moonlight. One goes in and sits down—and one sighs. It is as natural as smiling is at a different time.

But I had scarcely sat down and taken up a book, the first which came to hand, when I heard some one knock at the door and the footsteps of two people outside. My heart leaped to my mouth, and I sat listening with the intensity which one only feels when something very serious is happening. Could it be *Norah*, come to take refuge with me? But it was not *Norah*. A minute after, her sister *Priscilla* came trembling like a little ghost into the room. She was muffled in a great cloak, with the hood over her head, but had not changed her white evening dress, and her face was whiter than her gown. She came in, shutting the door and sending away my maid with a little trembling voice.

"That will do, thank you; don't trouble any more. Your mistress knows it is me, and the boy will wait in the hall," she said, and then came to me and knelt down by my side and looked piteously in my face.

"What is it?" I said, taking her hands into mine. They were very cold, and she was shivering with a nervous chill, though it was so warm a night.

"She has gone away with him," said *Priscilla*—like myself, too much overcome to waste her words. "I cannot find her anywhere. Oh! *Mrs. Mulgrave*, what am I to do?"

"Gone with him?" I said, in my horror. And yet I did not feel surprised. I seemed to have known all along that it must be so.

"I hoped she had gone to bed," moaned *Priscilla*. "I told *mamma* so. *Mamma* has gone to her room quite easy in her mind, thinking so. But she is not there. Where is she? Oh, where is she? And what must we do?"

Just at that moment there came an impa-

tient knocking at the window which opened to the garden. It was very soft yet very hasty—like one who came by stealth and yet had not a moment to spare. *Priscilla* sprang to her feet, and so did I. The shutters were all shut close; for it was on the ground floor, and easily accessible from the road. Once more I thought it was *Norah*, and so did her sister at my side. I don't know which of us it was that got the window open, we were both trembling so much, and obstructing each other in our eagerness. When we threw it open, a whole flood of moonlight and soft-scented night air came pouring in; but nothing else. We stood straining our eyes out, filled with I don't know what superstitious terror. *Priscilla* clutched at me with her little icy hand. Nothing we could have seen would have appalled us like that beautiful, awful vacancy, after the human sounds of appeal for admittance. I was so terrified at last by the rigid grasp of the white creature beside me, and the moon gleaming upon her staring eyes and pallid, ghostly little figure, that I turned round to support her. And then it was, I suppose, that *Lottie Stoke* ventured to come forward out of the shadow. *Priscilla* gave a terrible scream and fell down at my feet. I cannot deny but I had almost fainted too, when the other figure suddenly appeared behind me, and helped to lift her up. What saved me was that *Lottie* grasped my arm with a kind of violence. "It is me," she said, "*Lottie*," almost shaking me in her impatience. She had been afraid to come in, seeing two of us, and thus we lost ten precious minutes, as she said afterwards; for we had to bring *Priscilla* to her senses before we could hear each other speak.

"He has carried her off!" said *Lottie*, who had all the appearance of breathless haste. She had run all the way from the cottage, but had taken time to change her dress, and was evidently ready for action. "And I think I know where, *Mrs. Mulgrave*, if you have the courage to come. Have you the courage to come? *Priscilla*, be still, and don't pay any attention; you are just coming out of a faint. *Mrs. Mulgrave*, if you will come we may save them yet."

I cannot give any idea of the breathless

way in which Lottie spoke. She could not stand still. She kept sprinkling the *eau-de-cologne* over Priscilla, though she had come to by this time. And then she went and shut the windows, putting the shutters close with vigorous, trembling hands, and talking all the time. Priscilla, more dead than alive, sat up on the sofa where we had placed her.

"You will go, Mrs. Mulgrave?" she said. "Oh, go—for God's sake! before mamma knows."

"Where is it? What can we do? Children, you are driving me stupid," I cried. "Where can we go in the middle of the night?"

Then they both huddled close to me, and Lottie told her story. She had feared something from the moment they had disappeared into the conservatory; and Everard was not to be found. When they got home they found he had been there and had sent to the Barley-Mow for the gig. He told the servants he had been sent for to town, and that one of his sisters was going to see him off, and took a cloak of Lottie's and a hat. He was to leave the gig at a little inn near the Brentworth station, which was where the night express stopped. The maid, who had been curious, reported that the gig took him up with his companion under the shade of the lodge trees, so that she could not see which of the young ladies it was.

"Brentworth is six miles off," Lottie said, as she ended her tale. "Your pony would do it if you would come. When she said Brentworth, I knew where he must have gone. I will tell you on the road, Mrs. Mulgrave; only come."

"Oh, Mrs. Mulgrave, darling, go!" cried Priscilla, clasping her cold arms around me. My mind went slower than theirs—being older, I suppose.

"What good could we do?" said I. "There is not another train to-night. I would go if it would do any good. Lottie, my dear, think a moment; there is no train, and it is the middle of the night."

"He has not gone by the train," said Lottie; "I know where he has gone. I am sure I know. It is full moon, and the roads are light as day. I am not afraid to go anywhere,

if you will come. Oh! Mrs. Mulgrave, after all we have suffered, for my poor mother's sake."

"For my Norah's sake!" cried Priscilla, joining her two hands.

"I can put in the pony, myself!" Lottie cried, springing to her feet. "After all, we have not lost much time. I will tell Mary to bring you a glass of wine, and give me a light, and your big cloak. I have done it before. I shall be ready in ten minutes."

The emergency had brought out all the energy in her, while I, though I am not generally timid, sat trembling, not seeing my way. Two women alone driving across the country, in the middle of the night, through all that bright, prying, ghastly moonlight. We might meet tramps, or something worse, on the way. We might fall into evil hands. We might be murdered, for anything I could tell. And there was no trace to follow the fugitives to town by. Though they hurried me on with their impetuosity, I was afraid.

"It is not safe, it is not possible!" I cried. "We must wait till the morning. Two ladies alone! Lottie, you do not think what you say."

"Patrick came with me," said Priscilla, "he is as faithful as one of ourselves. He would go through fire and water for her. Oh, my Norah! I feel as if I dare not name her. Take Patrick, Mrs. Mulgrave, and for God's sake go!"

In ten minutes I found myself sitting wrapped up, and ready, waiting for the pony-carriage to come round. I could not resist them, though I could see no object in it.

"If mamma finds out, I will say she has come here in one of her tempers," said Priscilla. "I will say she has gone to you. If mamma knew—and oh! she was so aggravating to-day, and made Norah wild. I don't wonder at anything she did."

"Was it about him?" said Lottie, for I would not speak.

"Oh, no! it was about the other," said Priscilla. "He preferred her, as he was sure to do. The men all prefer Norah, she is so pretty and so lively; and sometimes the women too."

"Because you never let us see how good

you are!" cried Lottie, starting up, as we heard the sound of wheels. And for my part, all trembling and excited as I was, I took Priscilla into my arms and kissed her. Her tears came on my face warmer than her cheek was. We watched her make a tremulous rush down through the moonlight, and get safely within her own gate; and then Lottie and I, with Patrick behind us, turned off across the Green.

I have made many strange journeys in my life, and mostly on account of other people, having little enough to do for myself, but I don't recollect anything like that drive in the moonlight with the Irish stable-boy and Lottie Stoke. How still it was; how the moon shone and shone, growing bigger and fuller every moment, and wrapping us round and round in light. Every house on the road was fast asleep. The lights all out. The windows all covered, and the moonlight climbing in at them, an unsuspected thief, and whitening walls and roofs, and throwing awful ghastly shadows on everything in its way. There was scarcely a breath of air stirring. The roads were hard and dry, echoing under the pony's feet. Sometimes we thought we heard sounds of somebody before us. Sometimes of somebody pursuing, and would stop and hold our breath. It was the silence, I suppose, and the strange feeling of being all alone, awake and alive as it were, in the midst of this dead, motionless, sleeping world. And yet, Patrick the stable-boy was a kind of comfort too. Lottie told me where we were going as we went. An old servant of the Stokes, an old nurse, had a little farm near Brentworth. Lottie thought he would not take Norah to London, but there; and that what he said about the train was only to delude us. She thought he would stay there till the first noise of the discovery was over. And then she burst forth all at once with a passion of indignation, and rage, and scorn that bewildered me. "He is my brother!" she cried. "Oh, that one should have to despise one's brother! I seem to hate him when I think of it. He has done it for revenge, because he was disgraced there to-night. She is poor; she has nothing. He never wanted to marry her, Mrs. Mulgrave. He will keep her there till everybody knows

she has gone away with him, and then he will not marry her. I know him. Sometimes he is like the Devil himself!" cried Lottie, "and that is why I would not lose a moment. I will bring her home if I should die!"

"Lottie!" I cried, "he could not be such a villain. Men are bad enough, but not so bad as that."

"I do not mean he will do her any harm," said Lottie, with a violent crimson blush, which I could see, even in the moonlight; and her whip rose, and my poor pony started forward on the silent, silent road. The girl was excited and did not know what she was doing. I made her no answer, feeling sure that her indignation and agitation had carried her away, and warped her judgment even. Men are bad enough, but nowadays they don't do such things as that.

The nearer we came to our destination, the more silent we grew, and the faster went the pony, urged on by Lottie, who did not know what she was doing. When we passed Brentworth station, some one looked out from the little house by the railway, evidently startled by the noise we made, and threw up a window to watch us two ladies and the boy behind. He must have thought us ghosts, or madwomen. Then we turned down a long narrow country lane, all shaded with trees, and dark, which was still more terrifying than the light; and at last came to the farmhouse gate. Patrick jumped down to open it. We had never said a word to the lad of what our mission was; but he came up to the side of the carriage with a whisper, "Sure it's the gate is open, Miss. I'll go bail somebody's been here before us," he said. The chase had roused him, and so indeed, to some extent, it had me; hopeless though I was.

We drove up to the door—never was a house, to all appearance, more completely asleep. Perfect silence, darkness, windows closed, not so much as a creature stirring in the barnyard, or a dog to bark. "It is nonsense, Lottie," I said, thinking how we should possibly be able to explain to any innocent, unconscious people our object in this extraordinary visit; but Lottie was now too much excited to think of anything. When Patrick, by her orders, went and thundered at the door,

the sound seemed to wake up the whole country. A dog in the farmyard behind bayed deep and loud, and simultaneously, from a distance of miles all round, as one would have thought, other dogs replied to him. There was a universal stir in the air, in the trees, in the whole neighborhood. Night was surprised, and echoed and thrilled all over, but not a sound woke in the house. While we waited for an answer, the noise extinguished itself, as it were, and dead silence fell all around us again—dead silence, not a movement or breath in the Castle of Dreams we were assailing. Then the boy came round once more to the side of the carriage. "Sure they're a deal too quiet," he said; "if they didn't hear they'd be stirring. Will I knock again?" "Louder!" cried Lottie, in her impatience; and this time the summons was hideous. The first indication of response was the opening of a window in the other side of the house, and then Lottie called out loudly: "Mrs. Drayton, open the door," she said, "you are wanted. I know you hear me. Mrs. Stoke has sent for you; open the door!"

Patrick renewed his summons. This time it was successful. A gradual movement began inside. Some one came down stairs, and at last a bolt was withdrawn, but doubtfully. "It is me," cried Lottie, springing out of the carriage, "Lottie Stoke; don't you know my voice? Open the door, Mrs. Drayton; not one of us will ever speak to you again if you don't open the door."

"Coming, coming, Miss," said a frightened voice, and then the door opened, and a woman with dazzled, blinking eyes, and a candle in her hand, made her appearance reluctantly.

"Lord bless us, Miss Lottie! I thought it was robbers. What's brought you here in the middle of the night?"

"Where is my brother?" cried Lottie. "Dog't try to deceive me. I know he is here."

"Your brother! Mr. Everard!"

Lottie put her hand on the woman's shoulder and shook her in her excitement.

"Don't tell me any lies," she cried. "I know he has been here and some one with him. Where is he? If you try to shield him this time you will ruin him, Drayton. I must see

him this instant—this instant! Do you hear?"

The woman began to cry and put down her candle on the door-step—where it flickered wildly—and wrung her hands. "Oh! what am I to do! what am I to do!" she cried.

"Let me see my brother at once," Lottie repeated, clutching her by the shoulders, while for my part I cried out, "The young lady—the young lady! Bring her to us and let him alone!"

"Miss Lottie, if you will take my word, if you will believe me on my Bible oath," she cried, "as sure as you are sitting there, he went up to town by the express train." I could not restrain the groan that came from my lips. I had known it would come to nothing, and yet for a minute I had actually begun to hope. It was my groan that saved us. The woman stopped in her crying to give a curious glance at me. She must have seen, by the outline of my figure in the moonlight, that I was not young. I think she supposed me to be Norah's mother. She made a step forward and looked at me anxiously. What a strange, wild scene it was! and all the while that lovely moon, that cared nothing for us, shining, and the little flickering candle blazing away at her feet.

"Oh, what is he up to this time!" she cried; "Miss Lottie, tell me! He's my boy, and I'll stand up for him through thick and thin, but I've always been respectable, I told him so. I won't do nothing but what's right."

"Oh, good woman," I cried out of my shawls, "kind woman! Nothing shall be done to him if you will tell us where she is."

A little flicker of hope began to rise in me again. The woman stood irresolute, wringing her hands, and Lottie clutched at her, drew her aside, and began to talk eagerly, urging something upon her. I tried to listen, but they were too far off, and then another faint, indistinct sound caught my ear. What was it? It was like the creaking of a wooden stair, and some one stealing down one step at a time. Then I fancied I heard the sound of hurried, stealthy breathing. I did not scream out, though I was half dead with fright. If Everard Stoke were to spring out upon us, desperate, what should we do? Two wildered

women and Patrick, the stable-boy, against a cruel, strong man who would stick at nothing. I kept still and listened, though I was sick with terror, but some unconscious movement I made startled the pony, who took a sudden step forward as if we were starting to go away. Then I heard a short, sharp cry. I echoed it myself in my excitement, and out into the moonlight, overturning the candle, came rushing another figure all white, like a ghost.

"I am coming—I am coming," she cried, and seized the pony's reins. Oh, was it possible! I knew then I had never believed it, never hoped for it. Was it possible! "Norah! Norah! can it be you?"

She made a pause. She turned for a moment, as if she would go back. "Ah, then who would it be but me," she sighed. I threw my shawls off and laid my hands on her, and held her fast. Only then could I convince myself that it was true.

"Oh, Norah, come with me! come with me! We have come all this way to fetch you, Norah! Nobody will cross you or scold you—only come back!"

She resisted my arms for I don't know how long, resisted and held herself away like a naughty child; and then all at once, in her sudden, impulsive way, turned and threw herself on my breast.

"Is it you? I thought it could only be you—and did you come to fetch me, you darling woman? Oh dear, oh dear, what shall I do? When he comes back for me to-morrow he will break his heart."

God forgive me—was it not best to humor her and save her? "He knows where to come for you," I said. "He can come to me. I will leave a message. Norah, come for his sake! Oh, dear child—listen to me! even a man loves his wife best when he takes her out of another woman's arms."

She gave a sudden cry and buried her head on my shoulder. I felt her tremble in my arms. I knew if I could have seen it that her young face pressed against me was crimsoned with shame. But the shame woke resistance in her.

"I have done no harm," she said, turning her face from me. "He left me here till everything was ready. We are to be married

to-morrow. Oh, I cannot go back from my word. In the morning he is to come!"

"Norah," I said in my desperation, "I will give you to him—he can come to me."

I cannot tell how long this discussion went on. I became aware somehow that Lottie and the woman of the house were both standing by, spectators of the struggle. I held the girl fast. I never let her hand or her dress escape from me. I promised every wild impossibility that came into my head. I grew hoarse and faint with talking. But whether I should have succeeded, Heaven knows. It was not I who did it at last. Patrick, the stable-boy, had stolen round to the side where Norah stood. All at once he put his hand out and touched her. The lad was crying.

"Miss Norah," he sobbed out, "sure if you don't come home your darlint sister, your own sister, will break her heart and die."

Norah said not a word more. She broke out into sudden weeping, hysterical and loud, and then shivered so that I thought she would have fallen out of my hold. She was still in her ball dress, with the little white cloak about her which she had worn when she went into the conservatory with that villain. I put one of my shawls round her and she was grateful for it, and then we half lifted, half forced her into the pony carriage. All this time no one said a word; we scarcely ventured to breathe. When she was safe in the back seat, and I beside her with my arms around her; I gave the woman of the house some ridiculous message. Heaven knows what I said. "Tell him to come to me for her; I will give her to him, I pledge my word." Something like this I said in my folly. I felt Lottie's breath on my cheek and heard her whisper something which in my excitement I did not understand. And then—I could not believe it, it seemed to be a dream—we were driving back again, with Norah saved!

I thought of nothing as we drove back. The moonlight and the solitude were nothing to me. It was Patrick who drove, and we flew over the echoing roads, running a race with the dawn, and we won it, though I scarcely hoped we could. It was still only twilight when I opened my door like a thief,

and stole up to my room with the girl we had snatched out of the jaws of destruction. All this had been like a dream to Norah. She kissed me, and looked piteously in my face, and said, "When he comes to-morrow, you will give me to him," as I laid her in my own bed. I trembled to think what I was doing, but I promised once again—better come than the other, however bad it might be.

It was only when I stole down stairs again after this, that Lottie and I had time to look each other in the face in the faint light of the morning. "Do not vex yourself, dear Mrs. Mulgrave," she said, "he will never come back."

"It is not possible, Lottie!" "He will never, never come back. He would have left her there—Oh, do you think I don't know him—to bring shame on the house where he was shamed. You will have no trouble; he will never come near her or think of her again!"

I thought she judged him hardly. I did not believe any man could be capable of such villainy. For my own part, I believed I should have a great deal to go through. I lay down on the sofa in my dressing-gown (which I had worn all this time), and tried to sleep, but could not sleep for thinking what trouble I might have brought upon myself!—and what would her friends say to me! But in the mean time she was safe; nothing had happened; at least there was reason to be glad for that.

But oh how strange it was when Lady Louisa came to me in the morning as cheerful and mellow as ever, knowing nothing, Heaven be praised! of the kind of night we had passed. "I hear you have me runaway child harbored in your house," she said, "and it's whipped she ought to be for her saucy ways. But Norah always had a spirit of her own; she takes after me family, not after the Beresfords. Did they tell ye how we quarreled, me dear ma'am?" continued the cheerful mother; and I, a miserable deceiver, did not dare to meet her eye.

"No, mamma, unless Norah did," said poor little Priscilla, who was as pallid as a ghost. "It was this," said Lady Louisa: "and me child, you can go and tell your sister I forgive her. Sure we'll beat her when we get

home," she added with a twinkle in her eye,—"don't look like a specter, me dear. Bless the man," Lady Louisa continued, with her hateful candor, "I wish he'd been a thousand miles off. It was me Norah that took his eye, and I don't blame him, though Prissy was the one for him, me dear lady, and would have made him a darling of a wife. But the men are all fools, and never know what's good for them. So, as I was saying, it was Norah that took his eyes, and what do you think she came and told me just before dinner, to spoil me appetite: 'He may have sixty thousand a year if he likes,' she says, 'or the queen's crown, but I won't have him.' Think of that, me dear ma'am, for a mother that thinks of nothing but her children! But she takes it of me own family," said Lady Louisa, with a curious self-consolation. "I was a fool meself in me young days, and downright uncivil to the men. So we had some words, I won't deny, and what with that, and what with the poor boy Stoke, me tay was a failure. Ah, you're very polite: but it was a failure, me dear lady, and broke me heart. Please Heaven we'll do better another time; sure I'll have the boys down, and it will be different altogether. And as for the Colonel, it's hard to let ten thousand a year slip through one's fingers; but do you think even for that I'd be cruel to me own child!"

I begged Lady Louisa, with a troubled heart, to leave Norah with me for a day or two.

If he comes back to claim her, then, I thought, it would be time enough to tell her parents why. But my request was granted with the most cheerful readiness and without a fear. I cannot tell how the day passed. My head spun round and round, and the hours and the world seemed to spin with me. Norah was very grave, and I think a terrible doubt had risen in her mind. She remained in my room all day waiting for Everard. When the afternoon came I sent a messenger to Brentworth. *He had not been there.* He neither came nor wrote, nor took any further notice. I could not believe it. The second day I drove over myself and made sure. No, he had not come back. And if she had been left there—if no good angel had put the

thought in Lottie Stoke's mind to go and seek her, what would Norah have done? Her folly would have cost her her reputation and probably her life.

It did all but cost her her life as it was. Not immediately, for the child could not dispossess herself of the idea that somebody was to blame, and that Miss Stoke or Priscilla (she did not suspect me) were scheming to keep him away. For months she went about with eyes that seemed to question all the roads for miles off, spying everybody that passed. And then the poor child had a fever, and raved about it, asking of all why we did not let him come. But when she recovered, her delusions departed with the fever. A girl's painful first love, thank Heaven, seldom stands a great shock, and never surely such a shock as that.

Not very long after this the Beresfords left

the mansion, to the great affliction of all Dinglefield. They have been living in Italy since, and all over the world; and the last news we heard was, that the ten thousand a year was, after all, likely to come into the family, but not through Norah. Her dear little sister Priscilla, who had no objections to Colonel Fitzgerald, having, it would seem, caught his heart (if heavy dragoons have hearts) in the rebound. There is a rumor that Norah is after all going to marry young Everton, her cousin, Lady Fascally's son, notwithstanding the precautions taken by both families, and that everybody is distracted, and they are all very happy. However, I do not vouch for that. But this I am sure, that we would all put up triumphal arches and receive them with open arms if any good fortune should send Lady Louisa back again to complete her sadly interrupted series of days.

THE ILLINOIS AND ST. LOUIS BRIDGE.

THE feeling of admiration with which one surveys the rapidly advancing work of bridging the Mississippi at St. Louis, is blended with a certain poetic sadness—a sentiment excited by the contrast between the present and the past.

Twenty years ago this mighty river was mistress of the West; her levees were crowded with merchandise seeking transportation, and eager throngs, hurrying up and down the land, depended upon her aid in reaching their destination. A queenly superiority seemed to be the natural right of this noble river, and, with her importance to the commerce of the country constantly increasing, it was supposed that no rival could possibly appear.

But there was something of the usurper in the Mississippi, even from the first. People said her very name was stolen, and that her magnificent claims were all a pretence. They declared that the Missouri had the prior right to the homage paid the Mississippi, because it furnished the greater volume of water pouring through this channel to the Gulf, and also gave its own color, its mud, and its fertilizing properties to the majestic stream.

To all this the river in possession has never deigned to give an answer, but superbly rolling on her way, has exulted until now in her undisturbed supremacy. Sometimes, to show her power, she wrested a forest or a hamlet from its hold upon her banks; or, turning uneasily in her bed, swept new channels for her course, regardless whether the beings who made unrequited use of her energies, survived her pleasantries or perished in her remorseless arms.

This queenly river, however, happens to flow southward. Had her direction been east or west, her sway might have continued for a longer time; but Providence, by cutting out her course, cut short the term of her supremacy. Westward flows the stream of human life upon this continent. No highways leading north or south can possibly compete in the race for fortune with those tending towards the setting sun.

When, then, the Railroad appeared, running wherever it would, and able to overcome on land the resistance of gravity,—not so easily mastered on the water,—it at once became the autocrat of western transportation, overthrow-